

Talkin' bout a revolution

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

"In the distant jungles of Central America, revolution is in the air. The government of the Democratic Republic of El Diablo has been brutally overthrown and the evil despot known only as Fernandez rules the land! Summoned by the exiled leaders of your homeland, you must free your people from the oppressive yoke of the dictator by destroying the military bases that have protected Fernandez from the wrath of the people."

Thanks reverse of game box, now back on the shelf next to Commando and Ikari Warriors, you're getting your corners all scuffed.



With the scene set, it's your patriotic duty - playing as Harman - to infiltrate the occupied territory, free the incarcerated POWs who spin on the spot like Michael Jackson in jubilation, defeat the eight puppets of Fernandez's Junta and assassinate the tyrant himself.

Whilst also available for the 8-bit systems, the Amiga/ST version is an entirely different mercenary. All top-down run and gun shooters, yet bridging the gap were independent development teams bringing their own ideas and talent to the war room... Tony Crowther taking up the mantle where the two-player C64 variant was concerned.

On the Amiga the line-up was...

Coder: Rod Bowkett - Coder: Spiny Norman - Graphician:
Dean Lester - Graphician: M. Downey - Graphician: Rod
Bowkett

Spiny Norman is actually a possibly-maybe-probably-not imaginary giant hedgehog from a Monty Python series of sketches. When producing Amiga games he also went by the name Martin Day, the programmer who brought us Xenon II

The 16-bit editions rather than being split into distinct levels play as an extended, continuous strip, 256 screens long estimated to take 40 minutes to complete.



Beginning on foot you're armed only with a rifle loaded with an unlimited supply of bullets, perfect for dispatching enemy infantrymen. Unlike other games of this ilk your ammo travels the entire length of the screen rather than disintegrating partway across.

Limited use missile launchers can later be acquired that are better suited to eliminating vehicles such as tanks and boats or shaking cannon fodder free from their tree hidey holes.



When your supplies are depleted, dynamite can be used to blow the doors off buildings such as Back to the Future style clock towers harbouring safes chock full of extra lives, gold, and ammo. Pulling off the manoeuvre requires no more forethought than playing tag with the entrance; the explosives are laid automatically. Back off at the critical moment and the spoils are yours for the taking.



Rather like Konami's Jackal 1986 coin-op game you have the option to commandeer an enemy jeep. These are temporarily invincible so can be used to mow down troops without expending any ammo or worrying about targeting. It's Jeepmageddon! Unfortunately, after several hits their bonnets catch fire and they need to be ditched before they explode, unless you can find a car wash in which to extinguish the flames. Jeeps come equipped with their own rocket launchers allowing you to conserve your own supply, and these can be replenished by making a pit-stop at a friendly garage.



You get eight lives - one for each mission if you want to look at it that way. Your death animation entails you falling flat on your face, riddled with bullets and oozing the red stuff, though luckily each time you die you respawn on the spot saving you the hassle of retracing your steps.



Baddies aren't so lucky - they simply grunt and vanish into the ether never to return. This applies to infantry as well as tanks... and David Copperfield thought he had the monopoly on that particular magic trick. Curiously troops holed up in artillery bunkers keel over and remain in position when they take a bullet.



After you've made colanders out of the 789th battalion (give or take), the game ends abruptly and you are congratulated for defeating Fernandez. Before you have chance to dance on his grave you're informed that you're to be whisked off to another republic that desperately needs your help, and the game loops.



It's a bit buggy in that edge clipping is fuzzy in places, the enemy AI can easily be confused by standing too close to buildings, and a bit of music and a two-player option wouldn't have gone amiss. Still, it's not a bad entry in the overhead Rambo 'em up genre and the Fisher-Price cartoony graphics certainly help to set it apart from the crowd.



Despite the harmless, cutesy visuals, the German authorities saw fit to add Fernandez Must Die to the dreaded Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien index, deeming it material inappropriate for the consumption of young people. The upshot was that German kids grew up to be well-adjusted adults who wouldn't hurt a fly, while the rest of the world descended into a depraved, murderous, cold-blooded rampage.

Fernandez had to die, no question. It seems our innocence was the collateral damage.